



**Rhode Island Department of Health**

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[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

**Frequently Asked Questions About  
The School-based Vaccination Program & Schedule**

Date: October 23, 2009

To: Parents and guardians of students in grades kindergarten through 12

From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH

Re: School-based vaccination clinics

**Q: How will I know when my child's school vaccination clinic will be held?**

**A:** The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) has posted a preliminary schedule for its school-based vaccination program on its website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/schoolh1n1clinics/>. The dates of clinics may change slightly based on vaccine availability. School district superintendents and school principals will contact parents with the dates and times of clinics several days before clinics begin in their schools.

**Q: Does my child need a signed consent form to be vaccinated in school?**

**A:** Yes. Students will only be able to receive vaccinations in schools if they have signed and dated consent forms. If a student has not returned a signed and dated consent form to their school on or before the day of vaccinations in that school, they will have to wait to get vaccinated at a public clinic or a physician's office in late December or January. These consent forms were mailed to parents and guardians in mid October or were forwarded to them by school administrators. They are also available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on HEALTH's website. Please return the consent forms to your child's school (NOT HEALTH).

**Q: Where should I send my student's H1N1 vaccination consent form?**

**A:** Signed and dated H1N1 vaccination consent forms should be returned to schools. Consent forms should NOT be sent to HEALTH. Students are encouraged to return their consent forms to school in advance of the day of their vaccinations. This will help schools plan clinics.

**Q: How did HEALTH determine the order of schools for its schools-based vaccination program?**

**A:** HEALTH developed a randomized, computer-generated process to schedule school vaccination clinics over 28 vaccination days. Given the amount of available vaccine that Rhode Island will receive each week, this schedule allows HEALTH to vaccinate as many students as possible in as short an amount of time as possible. The dates of clinics are subject to vaccine availability and may change. The scheduling process was designed to strike balances between public, private and parochial schools as well as to strike a geographical balance and a balance between large and small schools.

**Q: Is the H1N1 vaccine safe?**

**A:** Yes. The H1N1 vaccine is being made by the same manufacturers who make the seasonal flu vaccine that millions of Americans receive every year. Manufacturers are

following every Food and Drug Administration protocol, quality check and safety review that they have followed when producing seasonal flu vaccines. Manufacturers spend approximately six months producing the seasonal flu vaccine every year, the same amount of time that they spent producing the H1N1 vaccine. Manufacturers took no shortcuts in producing this vaccine.

**Q: What side effects should I expect my child to experience?**

**A:** Children who receive the injectable vaccine may experience the same side effects that sometimes accompany the seasonal flu shot or any other vaccine. These include a low-grade fever, aches, and soreness, redness and swelling at the location of the shot. These are signs that the vaccine is working and that a child's immune system is producing antibodies to protect against the H1N1 virus.

**Q: Where can I find up-to-date information about HEALTH's school-based vaccination program?**

**A:** HEALTH will continue to publish the most up-to-date information about its school-based vaccination program on its [website](#). Parents and guardians should consult this web page regularly, as the information about the school-based vaccination program is subject to change. We understand that this may create difficulty for some parents who need to make special arrangements to bring their children to evening clinics. We will make the public aware of any scheduling changes as soon as possible. In addition to the information available on HEALTH's website, trained health professionals can answer parents' and guardians' questions in English or Spanish on HEALTH's H1N1 Information Line (222-8022).

**Q: What if my child is absent from school on the day of vaccinations?**

**A:** Children who are absent from school on the day that vaccines are administered in their school will not be vaccinated in HEALTH's school-based vaccination program. These children will be able to be vaccinated by their pediatrician or family physician or in public clinics, but vaccine for school-aged children will not be available in these settings until late December or early January. We understand that this creates a hardship for the parents or guardians of students who have compelling reasons for missing their clinics, however we cannot schedule makeup clinics given the limited amount of vaccine being delivered to Rhode Island.

**Q: Is vaccination against H1N1 voluntary?**

**A:** Yes. Although HEALTH recommends that all students receive the vaccination, no child can be vaccinated without the consent of a parent or guardian.

**Q: What type of vaccine will be used in school clinics?**

**A:** Children who are vaccinated in schools will receive injectable vaccine. Intranasal vaccine will not be available in HEALTH's school-based vaccination program. Parents of school-aged children who want their children to receive intranasal vaccine will need to consult their pediatricians or family physicians or visit a public clinic. Intranasal vaccine will not be available to school-aged children until late December or early January.

**Q: Who will give my child the vaccine in school?**

**A:** H1N1 Teams will vaccinate students. H1N1 Teams will consist of a health professional such as a nurse, physician or pharmacist who will administer the vaccine; a nurse or emergency medical technician who will assist in vaccine administration; and an

administrative aide who will handle consent forms and other paperwork. All H1N1 Team members are members of the Rhode Island Medical Reserve Corps.

**Q: Why can't I find my child's school's name on the list?**

**A:** Parents should search for the official name of their child's school, not its local name or nickname. Pre-kindergarten and private kindergarten schools were left off of the list because students in these schools should be vaccinated by their physicians. Any new schools will be inserted into the schedule randomly and not at the end of the line. School officials who feel that their school should be added to the list should call HEALTH's H1N1 Information Line (222-8022).

**Q: At what time will clinics take place?**

**A:** Middle and high school students will be vaccinated during the school day and, in general, elementary school students will be vaccinated after school between 4 and 8 p.m. However, locations and times may vary. Check the schedule on HEALTH's website for information about your child's school. School district superintendents and school principals will contact parents with the dates and times of clinics in specific schools.

**Q: Can my child be vaccinated with his sibling in a school that he does not attend?**

**A:** No. Children can only be vaccinated in schools that they attend.

**Q: Where will home-schooled children be vaccinated?**

**A:** Home-schooled children will be vaccinated in the public school that they would otherwise attend. School district superintendents and school principals are contacting the parents and guardians of the home-schooled children that will be vaccinated in their schools.

**Q: Can children with asthma receive the vaccine in school?**

**A:** Yes. Children with asthma can receive the injectable vaccine, which is being administered in school-based clinics. Children with asthma should not receive the intranasal vaccine, which will not be administered in schools.

**Q: My child is allergic to eggs. Can she receive the vaccine in school?**

**A:** You should consult your child's pediatrician or family physician before the vaccination date at her school.

**Q: Where will children who attend kindergarten in private/preschool settings be vaccinated?**

**A:** Although the majority of Rhode Island's kindergartners attend elementary schools and will be vaccinated in clinics organized by their school districts, some children attend kindergarten in preschool settings that will not offer clinics. These kindergartners should receive the H1N1 vaccine from their pediatricians or family physicians. Pediatricians and family physicians have been directed to vaccinate children who attend private/independent kindergarten programs even if they are over the age of five years.

**Q: Will pregnant high school students be vaccinated in school?**

**A:** No. Obstetricians or midwives should vaccinate pregnant high school students. The vaccine is available now in obstetricians' offices.

**Q: Can students who attend schools out of state (e.g. Connecticut or Massachusetts) be vaccinated in a Rhode Island school?**

**A:** No. Students who attend schools outside of Rhode Island (e.g. Connecticut or Massachusetts) should get the vaccine either at their schools or from their physicians' offices or public clinics, which will likely be available in late December. We have spoken to the Departments of Public Health in Connecticut and Massachusetts who indicate that there will be school vaccination clinics in those states but that the dates and times have not yet been scheduled. Please consult the other states' public health websites (via [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)) for information about vaccination clinics in those states.

**Q: How can I find the tentative date that vaccinations will be offered in my child's school?**

**A:** You can search for the tentative clinic date for your child's school on HEALTH's website or you can consult one of three clinic tables on the website. One table lists all the schools by city or town, the second lists clinics in the order in which they will be held and the third table lists the 28 vaccination days with the calendar dates that tentatively correspond to them (factors such as vaccine availability and snow days could cause changes). The tables include information about the times of clinics ("AM" indicates an in-school clinic and "PM" indicates a clinic that will run from approximately 4 to 8 pm).

**Q: If my child is sick the day of the school vaccination clinic, can he still get the vaccine?**

**A:** Yes, unless your child has a fever. If your child has a fever, he should stay home from school and get the vaccine from his physician or in a public clinic. Vaccine should be available in these settings for school-aged children as of late December or January.

**Q: Can my child get the flu from the H1N1 vaccine?**

**A:** No. The injectable H1N1 vaccine does not contain any live virus. It is not possible to get the flu from the injectable H1N1 vaccine. However, this does not mean that your child cannot develop a cold or catch the H1N1 virus shortly after receiving the vaccine.

**Q: If my child already had the flu, does she need the H1N1 vaccine?**

**A:** Yes. Many of the people who had influenza like illness this year (fever plus a cough or fever plus a sore throat) did not have H1N1 but other viruses. In addition, the influenza virus mutates. Therefore, we recommend that everyone get the vaccine, even if they had or thought they had H1N1 already. Even if a child had H1N1 already, getting the vaccine is safe and will not cause any adverse reactions.

**Q: Are there any medications that would prevent my child from getting the vaccine?**

**A:** No. If your child is on medications he or she can still receive the vaccine.

**Q: Will my child need a second (booster) shot?**

**A:** Children 10 years of age and older only need one shot. Children who are younger than 10 years old will need two shots just like they do for seasonal flu vaccine. The second shots will be given in school clinics starting in January.

**Q: How long after getting the vaccine will my child be protected from H1N1 virus?**

**A:** After getting the vaccine, your body takes approximately 10 days to develop antibodies against the H1N1 virus. Antibodies are one of the main ways your body protects itself against infections. Children 10 years or older, only need one shot. Children who are younger than 10 years old need a second booster shot at least one month later. The vaccine is the most effective way to prevent getting the H1N1 virus but is not 100% effective and does not protect against other viruses that can cause fever, cough and sore throat.